7 May 2014 - The Met Office has joined a new groundbreaking research partnership aimed at identifying the effects of climate change on health and well being in the UK.

Met Office scientists are part of the National Institute for Health Research Health Protection Research Unit (NIHR HPRU) in Environmental Change and Health. This is being led by the London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine , in partnership with Public Health England (PHE) and with support from the University of Exeter's European Centre for Environment and Human Health and the Complex Built Environment Systems Group at UCL .

The HPRU will identify emerging health effects of large scale changes to our environment and look at the policy changes and mitigation steps that may be needed.

The research will focus on three main themes:

- climate resilience, focusing on preventing adverse health effects of climate change extreme and weather events such as heat waves, cold, and flooding
- healthy sustainable cities, focusing on how the built environment affects our health, and the health benefits of housing and urban planning
- health and the natural environment, focusing on the health effects of green spaces, airborne exposures, such as pollen, and the ecology of infectious diseases.

Met Office scientist Peter Falloon said: "When viewed over long-term averages the UK is expected to see more milder, wetter winters and more frequent hotter, drier summers. But the UK has seasonal weather that also varies hugely from year to year due to natural processes. New analysis suggests that through this century we should also plan to be resilient to wet summers and to cold winters."

Dr Sari Kovats from the London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine said: "The recent flood events in England have shown that we need to understand better population resilience to extreme weather. Recent debates about our energy choices also underscore the need for better evidence on health effects, including the risk and opportunities associated with a low carbon economy. This is an important and groundbreaking collaboration between the leading UK institutions currently working in this area."

Professor Lora Fleming from the University of Exeter Medical School said: "How we live with and adapt to rapid environmental change, ranging from climate change to chemical pollution, and the interactions with human health, is an important challenge for the 21st Century, providing both risks and opportunities. For example, we are seeing important benefits to human well being from interactions with the natural environment."

The NIHR HPRU aims to provide evidence to support decision makers who need to ensure that the health of the UK population is not adversely affected by global scale environmental changes that result from climate change.

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